

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEHRAN 01733 231146Z

47

ACTION NEA-09

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R 230925Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 338

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NEW YROK

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 1733

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IR, IS, EG, XF

SUBJ: IRANIAN SHIFT FROM ISRAEL TO ARABS -- FACT OR ILLUSION?

SUMMARY: DESPITE RECENT INDICATIONS OF IRANIAN RAPPROCHEMENT WITH ARAB STATES, EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE IRAN HAS CHANGED ITS EVEN-HANDED POLICY TOWARDS ARAB/ISRAEL CONFLICT OR ITS COMMITMENT TO ISRAEL'S SURVIVAL. RATHER THERE HAS BEEN CHANGE IN TONE OF IRAN'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS FOR TACTICAL REASONS AND AN EFFORT TO BRING ABOUT CONDITIONS CONDUCIVE TO LASTING SETTLEMENT OF THE DISPUTE. END
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PAGE 02 TEHRAN 01733 231146Z

SUMMARY.

1. DURING PAST FEW MONTHS SOME POLITICAL ANALYSTS HAVE COME TO CONCLUSION THAT IRAN'S "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP" WITH ISRAEL HAS BEEN ERODED AND THAT ITS POLICY HAS SHIFTED SIGNIFICANTLY TOWARD GREATER SUPPORT OF ARAB COUNTRIES IN CONFRONTATION WITH ISRAEL. AS INDICATIONS THAT THIS IS SO, THEY POINT TO IRAN'S VOTE AGAINST ISRAEL IN NOVEMBER UNESCO MEETING; SHAH'S HIGHLY PUBLICIZED VISITS TO EGYPT AND JORDAN; HIS STATEMENTS DURING THOSE VISITS OF SUPPORT FOR UN RESOLUTION 242 AND LEGITIMATE RIGHTS OF PALESTINIANS AND HIS REJECTION OF UNILATERAL CHANGES IN JERUSALEM'S STATUS; AND NEW PUBLICITY GIVEN TO ECONOMIC AID FOR EGYPT, SYRIA AND JORDAN AND PROMISE OF F-5'S TO JORDAN.

2. ON BASIS OF SHAH'S RECENT STATEMENTS AND DISCUSSIONS WITH PRIME MINISTER, FOREIGN MINISTER, AND ISRAELI MISSION OFFICIALS, EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE THERE HAS BEEN FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN IRAN'S ATTITUDE AND POLICY TOWARD ARAB/ISRAEL DISPUTE. RATHER THERE HAS BEEN CHANGE IN TONE OF IRAN'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS FOR TACTICAL REASONS AND AN ATTEMPT TO STRENGTHEN IRAN'S POSITION AND INFLUENCE IN MIDDLE EAST THROUGH CULTIVATION OF MODERATE ARABS. FLAW IN REASONING OF THOSE WHO SEE IRANIAN SHIFT AWAY FROM PREVIOUS EVEN-HANDED POLICY TOWARDS ISRAEL, IT SEEMS TO US, IS THAT SITUATION IS NOT ONE IN WHICH GAIN FOR ONE SIDE AUTOMATICALLY MEANS LOSS FOR OTHER. SHAH BELIEVES BOTH SIDES CAN GAIN AT SAME TIME. WHILE HELPING ARAB COUNTRIES ACHIEVE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STABILITY HE CAN MAINTAIN HIS COMMITMENT TO SURVIVAL OF ISRAEL AND EVEN MAKE THAT SURVIVAL MORE LIKELY. SHAH HAS OVERRIDING INTEREST IN MAINTAINING PEACE IN AREA AND WANTS TO PLAY CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN BRINGING IT ABOUT. HE SEES SADAT AS STRONG LEADER WHO SHARES HIS DESIRE TO CURTAIL INFLUENCE OF RADICAL ARAB REGIMES AND USSR IN MIDEAST. BY HELPING HIM AND OTHER MODERATE ARAB LEADERS STRENGTHEN THEIR POSITION, SHAH HOPES TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR THEM TO TAKE FURTHER STEPS TOWARD SETTLEMENT WITH ISRAEL ALONG SECRETARY KISSINGER'S STEP-BY-STEP ROUTE. SHAH'S IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH MODERATE ARABS ALSO PROMISE ADDITIONAL DIVIDENDS IN ISOLATING IRAQ IN ITS CONFLICT WITH IRAN AND IN SUPPORT FOR IRAN'S PERSIAN GULF POLICIES.

3. ALTHOUGH MOVE TOWARD CLOSER IDENTIFICATION WITH ARABS HAS RECENTLY ACCELERATED, IT HAS BEEN UNDERWAY SINCE EARLY 1970'S WHEN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TEHRAN 01733 231146Z

SHAH SEEMS TO HAVE REALIZED THAT BENEFITS TO IRAN OF CONTINUING ARAB/ISRAEL CONFLICT -- KEEPING RADICAL ARABS OCCUPIED IN WEST AND GIVING IRAN FREER HAND IN GULF -- NO LONGER OUTWEIGHED DANGERS OF EXPANDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOVIET PENETRATION AND MISCHIEF-MAKING IN MIDEAST. BUT EVEN DURING HEIGHT OF OCTOBER 1973 WAR IRAN HELD BACK FROM WHOLLY PARTISAN SUPPORT FOR ARAB CAUSE. WHILE PROCLAIMING SOLIDARITY WITH MUSLIM (NOT "ARAB") SOLDIERS, GOI DID NOT TAKE PART IN WAR MILITARILY, KEPT LID ON ANTI-ISRAEL AND PRO-ARAB

PROPAGANDA IN IRANIAN PRESS, AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, CONTINUED SHIPPING OIL TO ISRAEL THROUGHOUT CONFLICT.

4. OIL, AS EMBASSY TEL AVIV HAS PUT IT, IS LITMUS TEST OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IRAN AND ISRAEL. PRESS RECOGNIZES THIS AND HAS QUESTIONED SHAH REPEATEDLY TO SEE IF COLOR OF LITMUS PAPER HAD CHANGED. AT PRESS CONFERENCE AFTER ZURICH MEETING WITH SECRETARY FEBRUARY 18, SHAH WAS ASKED WHETHER IRAN WAS PREPARED TO PLAY ROLE IN SECRETARY'S DIPLOMACY BY SUPPLYING OIL TO ISRAEL IF ISRAEL HAD TO GIVE UP SINAI OIL FIELDS. HE REPLIED, AS HE HAS CONSISTENTLY DONE IN PAST, THAT IRAN DID NOT TAKE PART IN FIRST OIL EMBARGO AND WOULD NOT TAKE PART IN FUTURE EMBARGOES BECAUSE IT BELIEVES POLITICS AND COMMERCE SHOULD BE SEPARATE. SECRETARY REPORTEDLY LATER TOLD NEWSMEN ABOARD HIS PLANE THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED ISRAEL'S OIL PROBLEMS WITH SHAH AND THAT LATTER'S RESPONSE IN PRESS CONFERENCE THEREFORE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED SIGNIFICANT. PRIME MINISTER ON FEBRUARY 11 GAVE SIMILAR ASSURANCES REGARDING CONTINUED SUPPLY OF OIL TO ISRAEL TO HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE DELEGATION VISITING TEHRAN.

5. ISRAELI MISSION HERE ALSO DOES NOT SEE ANY BASIC CHANGE IN IRAN'S POLICY TOWARD ISRAEL. DCM LEVINE TOLD POLCOUNS, AS CHIEF OF MISSION LUBRANI HAD TOLD SENATOR PERCY (TEHRAN 210), THAT GOVT OF ISRAEL TAKES AT FACE VALUE SHAH'S ASSURANCES THAT IRAN WOULD NOT CUT OFF OIL OR HELP ARABS MILITARILY IF WAR BROKE OUT AGAIN. ISRAELIS PAY ATTENTION NOT TO WHAT SHAH SAYS PUBLICLY BUT WHAT HE DOES, AND THEY CONSIDER IT NATURAL THAT WHEN VISITING CAIRO AND AMMAN HE WOULD SAY THINGS AGREEABLE TO HOSTS AS PART OF CAMPAIGN TO CURRY THEIR FAVOR. IRAN HAS SUPPORTED RESOLUTION 242 AND JERUSALEM STATUS SINCE 1967, LEVINE RECALLED, AND RECENT ADVERTISING OF FACT DOES NOT CONSTITUTE CHANGE IN POLICY. HE BELIEVES SHAH IS HELPING EGYPT, SYRIA AND JORDAN AS BULWARK AGAINST SOVIET ADVANCES IN MIDEAST, AND THAT HIS CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR VIABLE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 TEHRAN 01733 231146Z

ISRAEL IS FOR SAME REASON. TO ALLOW ISRAEL TO GO UNDER WOULD UPSET BALANCE OF POWER IN AREA, FREEING RADICAL ARABS TO TURN ENERGIES AGAINST IRAN WITH HELP AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF SOVIETS. ON PLO QUESTION, LEVINE SAID ISRAELI GOVT HAD SOUGHT AND RECEIVED ASSURANCES FROM GOI LAST FALL THAT IRANIAN EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT FOR PLO AT UNGA SESSION DID NOT MEAN IRAN WOULD PUSH FOR CREATION OF PALESTINIAN STATE. SINCE PLO HAD ACHIEVED MEASURE OF RESPECTABILITY, IRANIAN GOVT HAD TO GO ALONG EVEN THOUGH IT HARBORED AMBIVALENT FEELINGS ABOUT IT, BELIEVING THAT CREATION OF SEPARATE PALESTINIAN STATE COULD ULTIMATELY LEAD TO DOWNFALL OF HUSAYN AND PROBABLY FAYSAL AS WELL.
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